

Message Text

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TAGS: SOPN, SCUL, OEXC, UR
SUBJECT: DIRECTOR TAGANKA THEATER, LYUBIMOV, UNDER ATTACK

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SUMMARY: TWO ARTICLES WITHIN A WEEK, ONE IN "LITERATURNAYA GAZETA" (MARCH 8), THE OTHER IN "PRAVDA" (MARCH 11) HAVE ATTACKED YURIY PETROVICH LYUBIMOV, DIRECTOR OF MOSCOW'S TAGANKA THEATER, THE "PRAVDA" PIECE USING LANGUAGE AGAINST A LEADING CULTURAL FIGURE NOT SEEN IN RECENT YEARS. AGAINST BACKGROUND OF DISCUSSIONS IN CULTURAL CIRCLES WHICH HAVE SURFACED RECENTLY, MOST DRAMATICALLY DURING DECEMBER 21 MEETING IN MOSCOW'S WRITERS CLUB (REF), "PRAVDA'S" SHARP ATTACK, WHICH USES SAME VOCABULARY AS DURING WRITERS CLUB DEBATE, SEEN AS MARKING NEW DEPARTURE IN TYPE AND LEVEL OF ARGUMENT ON SUBJECT OF INNOVATION IN SOVIET CULTURE, AND POSSIBLE SHIFT TO EVEN GREATER CONTROL THAN HERETOFORE OVER RELATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET CULTURAL ESTABLISHMENT AND WEST. LYUBIMOV HIMSELF NOW UNCERTAIN WHETHER HE WILL BE ALLOWED CONTINUE WORK FOR PARIS OPERA ON TCHAIKOWSKY'S "THE QUEEN OF SPADES." HAVING JUST RETURNED FROM PRELIMINARY VISIT TO PARIS, HE SAYS THAT RETURN TRIP TO STAGE THE OPERA IS CLEARLY IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTION AFTER THE "PRAVDA" PIECE. END SUMMARY.

1. TO THE ARTICLES THEMSELVES: LITGAZ ATTACKS LYUBIMOV FOR AN INTERVIEW HE GAVE "L'HUMANITE" IN WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY COMPLAINED OF THE INADEQUATE SUBSIDY RECEIVED BY HIS THEATER AND ALSO OF THE MANNER IN WHICH LITGAZ HAD HANDLED HIS COMMENTS ON A QUOTATION OF HIS

REMARKS REFERRING TO VENICE'S "BIENNALE '77" EXHIBIT ON SOVIET DISSIDENT CULTURE. LYUBIMOV IS TAUNTED BY LITGAZ WITH THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN "L'HUMANITE"--THAT HE WILL SUE LITGAZ; AND READERS ARE ASSURED, WITH SOME FIGURES TO SUPPORT THE PAPER'S CLAIM, THAT THE TAGANKA THEATER RECEIVES A SUBSIDY FROM THE STATE TOTALLING SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF RUBLES PER ANNUM. ACCORDING TO FRIENDS OF LYUBIMOV, THERE HAS BEEN BAD BLOOD BETWEEN LYUBIMOV AND LITGAZ EDITOR CHAKOVSKIY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. IT IS SAID THAT LYUBIMOV CAN BE MERCILESS AND HARSH IN DISCUSSION CONCERNING HIS THEATER, WHEN IT IS CRITICIZED. THUS, UNTIL THE "PRAVDA" PIECE APPEARED, THE LITGAZ ARTICLE WAS CONSTRUED AS EVIDENCE OF NO MORE THAN PERSONAL ANIMOSITY BETWEEN CHAKOVSKIY AND LYUBIMOV. THE PRESS AND CULTURAL COUNSELOR WAS TOLD MARCH 10 BY A CLOSE ACQUAINTANCE OF BOTH MEN "NOT TO WORRY ABOUT LYUBIMOV; HE CAN HANDLE HIMSELF WELL ENOUGH." IN THE FACE OF THE "PRAVDA" PIECE, HOWEVER, THE LITGAZ ARTICLE TAKES ON ANOTHER MEANING.

2. THE "PRAVDA" PIECE IS A LETTER TO THE PAPER UNDER THE HEADING "IN DEFENSE OF 'THE QUEEN OF SPADES'", OSTENSIBLY BY ALGIS ZHIURAITIS, A CONDUCTOR AT THE BOL'SHOY. A SHARP POLEMICAL ATTACK, IT IS, IN THE UNANIMOUS JUDGMENT OF SOVIET LITERARY CRITICS, THEATER PEOPLE AND WRITERS WITH WHOM EMBOFFS HAVE BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ABLE TO SPEAK, THE FIRST OF THIS SEVERITY IN "PRAVDA" IN MANY YEARS. PRECISELY HOW THE ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN, NO ONE COULD SAY. ONE REASONABLE SPECULATION IS THAT UNION OF COMPOSERS SECRETARY-GENERAL TIKHON KHRENNIKOV WAS IRATE AT WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD TO BE A MAJOR CHANGE IN TCHAIKOWSKY'S SCORE. HOWEVER REASONABLE THIS IS, NO ONE WILL SPECULATE AT REASON LYUBIMOV AND OTHERS INVOLVED WERE NOT SPOKEN TO IN MORE PRIVATE CIRCUMSTANCES. A MAN CLOSE TO LYUBIMOV REITERATED THAT HE HAS FOUGHT HIS WAY THROUGH MANY A FEISTY ARGUMENT AS HE DEVELOPED HIS THEATER AND, PERHAPS, THE BOOM WAS LOWERED ON HIM NOW TO "BRING SOME SENSE INTO HIS STUBBORN HEAD." THE ARTICLE, IN ANY CASE, ATTACKS LYUBIMOV WITHOUT ONCE MENTIONING HIS NAME. ONLY A PARAGRAPH ADDED AT THE END OF ARTICLE, AFTER ZHIURAITIS'S SIGNATURE, INFORMS THE READER THAT LYUBIMOV IS PREPARING TO STAGE "THE QUEEN OF SPADES" IN PARIS, ALSO THAT CONDUCTOR ROZHDESTVENSKIY SCHEDULED TO CONDUCT THE WORK, ONCE SAID HE WOULD NOT CHANGE A SINGLE NOTE OF THE ORIGINAL SCORE.

3. THE CHARGES AGAINST THE NEW PRODUCTION ARE SEVERE AND CAST IN A SHARP AND ACCUSATORY TONE. THOSE WHO WOULD BE

GUILTY OF CHANGING TCHAIKOWSKY'S ORIGINAL SCORE ARE
VIOLATING RUSSIAN CULTURAL TRADITION, "ALL THAT IS HOLY
TO US." THE "AVANT GARDE" CANNOT BE CALLED IN TO CORRECT
PETR ILYICH'S SCORE UNDER THE PRETEXT THAT HE WAS UNHAPPY
WITH HIS BROTHER MODEST'S SCENARIO. SHOULD "THE QUEEN OF
SPADES" NOW BE TURNED INTO AN "AMERICANIZED MUSICAL?" THE
ARTICLE INQUIRES. PANDERING TO THE TASTE OF FOREIGN
AUDIENCES, THE NEW VERSION OF "THE QUEEN OF SPADES"
WOULD CONSTITUTE "A MEDIEVAL AUTO DA FE" BY "INQUISITORS" JIPHB#
OF A WORK
"ADMIRER BY THE SOVIET PEOPLE AND MUSIC LOVERS
OF ALL LANDS." "IS IT REALLY DIGNIFIED," WRITES ZHIURAITIS
"TO BETRAY OUR HOLY WORK FOR THE SAKE OF PETTY INTERESTS

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IN CHEAP FOREIGN PUBLICITY?" "THE QUESTION OF 'THE QUEEN
OF SPADES' IS A SERIOUS AND DISTURBING ONE," THE ARTICLE
CONTINUES. "IT GOES BEYOND THE BORDERS OF HARMLESS
EXPERIMENTATION, WHICH IS HOW IT IS PRESENTED. THIS IS
A PREMEDITATED ACT OF DESTRUCTION OF A MONUMENT OF
RUSSIAN CULTURE." THE ARTICLE CLOSES WITH A CALL FOR
PROTESTS AGAINST THOSE WHO WERE PLANNING THIS PRODUCTION,
FROM "ALL TO WHOM THE GREAT HERITAGE OF RUSSIAN CULTURE

IS PRECIOUS" AND IT CHALLENGES THE "RESPONSIBLE ORGANS"
WITH HAVING BEEN LAX IN THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN PERMITTING
"SUCH MOCKERY OF A RUSSIAN CLASSIC."

4. LYUBIMOV HIMSELF PROFESSED TO KNOW NO REASON WHY HIS
PRODUCTION OF "THE QUEEN OF SPADES" HAD BEEN SINGLED OUT
FOR ATTACK IN "PRAVDA". IN A VISIT TO HIS THEATER OFFICE
AFTERNOON OF MARCH 11, P&C COUNSELOR FOUND LYUBIMOV AND
HIS CLOSE COLLABORATOR, SCENE DESIGNER DAVID BOROVSKIY,
LITERALLY DISCUSSING THE "PRAVDA" PIECE, UNDERLINING
AND ANNOTATING IT. ATTEMPTS TO ELICIT FROM LYUBIMOV
SPECULATION ON REASONS FOR ATTACK ON HIS INNOVATIVE
APPROACH TO THEATER AND TO PRESENTATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY
WORKS BROUGHT ONLY MINIMAL RESPONSE. INSTEAD, LYUBIMOV
LAUNCHED INTO LONG DEFENSE OF RUSSIAN AVANT GARDE AND OF
HIS THEATER AS PROVIDING IN DRAMATIC FORM THE VERY BEST IN
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RUSSIAN CULTURE. THAT HIS APPROACH IS INNOVATIVE, THAT HE
HAS RE-WORKED THE CLASSICS, THAT HE IS THEREFORE LIABLE
FOR THE CRITICISM TYPIFIED BY THE DISCUSSION WHICH RAGED
AT THE UNION OF WRITERS ON THE NOW FAMOUS EVENING OF
DECEMBER 21, STRUCK LYUBIMOV AS IRRELEVANT TO THE BASIC
FACT, THAT "I AM NOT AN UNKNOWN CANDIDATE FOR A DIPLOMA;
EVERYONE KNOWS MY THEATER PHILOSOPHY." REFERENCES TO
EARLIER CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE P&C COUNSELOR AND LYUBIMOV
IN EARLY DECEMBER AS THE "SOVYETSKAYA KULTURA" ARTICLES
CRITICAL OF THE NEW STANISLAVSKIY PRODUCTION OF "THE
QUEEN OF SPADES" WERE PUBLISHED, SIMILARLY ELICITED NO
SUBSTANTIAL COMMENT. LYUBIMOV CONTENTED HIMSELF MERELY
BY SAYING SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE WAS "THINKING IT ALL OVER,"
AND WOULD BE WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITORS OF BOTH
"LITERATURNAYA GAZETA" AND "PRAVDA," TO PROTEST THEIR
ARTICLES. ALSO, HE WAS DEBATING WHETHER TO INSTITUTE
LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST LITGAZ. ACCORDING TO FRIENDS
OF LYUBIMOV, BY MARCH 12 HE HAD WRITTEN A LETTER TO
"PRAVDA" AND WAS CONSIDERING HOW TO HANDLE IT.

COMMENT: WHERE DOES LYUBIMOV GO FROM HERE? MORE
IMPORTANTLY, WHAT DOES THE ATTACK ON HIM PORTEND FOR THE
FATE OF SIMILAR INNOVATIVE APPROACHES BY THE CREATIVE
INTELLGENTSIA? TO A RATHER BROAD CROSS-SECTION OF THEATER
AND LITERARY PERSONALITIES SPOKEN TO BY EMBOFFS, THE
WARNING TO LYUBIMOV IS CLEAR. HE WOULD DO WELL TO PULL IN
HIS HORNS. IF "THE QUEEN OF SPADES" IS TO BE STAGED IN
PARIS, IT WILL GO ON WITH A RELATIVELY UNTOUCHED SCORE,
HOWEVER IMAGINATIVE IS HIS STAGING. AS FOR HIS LOCAL
PRODUCTIONS, IT IS ALREADY SUGGESTED THAT A PLANNED STAGE
VERSION OF TRIFONOV'S "THE HOUSE ON THE EMBANKMENT"
WILL BE POSTPONED, WITH A STAGE TREATMENT OF TRIFONOV'S

MOST RECENT NOVEL, SCHEDULED FOR PUBLICATION THIS SPRING,
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REPLACING IT ON THE TAGANKA'S AUTUMN SCHEDULE. IF
LYUBIMOV CHALLENGES THE AUTHORITIES FRONTALLY, BEYOND
LETTER WRITING TO LITGAZ AND "PRAVDA", IT WOULD NOT BE
IMPOSSIBLE EVEN FOR A FIGURE OF HIS INTERNATIONAL
FAME TO BE RETIRED, AND HIS FRIENDS SUGGEST THAT HE IS
AWARE OF THIS REALITY OF LOCAL LIFE. AS FOR THE LARGER
PICTURE, EMBASSY SOURCES CAUTION AGAINST PREDICTING A
RETURN "TO STALINISM AND ZHDANOVISM." IN THE WORDS OF A
NOTED LITERARY CRITIC, "WE ARE FAR BEYOND SUCH EXCESSES,"
AND HE REMINDS THAT THE "DEBATE" BETWEEN THE INNOVATORS
OR WESTERNIZERS AND THE CONSERVATIVES OR SLAVOPHILES IS AN
OLD ONE IN RUSSIAN HISTORY. THE VERY DEBATE, IN FACT,
DEFINES THE RUSSIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE THAT "PRAVDA" SEEKS
TO DEFEND. THIS MAY BE CLOSE TO THE TRUTH, BUT NO PRESENT
COMFORT TO YURIY PETROVICH LYUBIMOV WHO, AT 61, KNOWS HIS
RUSSIAN CULTURAL HISTORY WELL--AND HAS EXPERIENCED
STALINISM AND ZHDANOVISM FIRST HAND. TOON

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